

HOW TO READ 50 BOOKS AN YEAR

Summary of the course taught by Shaykh Wael Ibrahim

(Summarized by Muhammad Nabeel Musharraf with some additional comments)



Understand your reading ability:

- Average reading speed for an adult: 200-250 words per min
- Time to read a usual 64,000 words book = 5.33 hours
- How many books can you read a year with only 30 minutes a day - 34 books per year!
- If you spend 45 minutes every day, you can read 50 books a year!

Importance of reading:

- The pagan warriors who were captured after the battle of Badr were given the option to teach the Muslims to read to get free – that is the value of this skill in Islam.
- This also shows that we can learn from non-Muslims too
- Many a time, just a single idea can change someone's life. Many people become Muslim after reading something. Shaykh shared his personal story about coming to Islam too. He used to hate reading. Every week he used to buy magazines about footballers – not to read the magazines but to cut out the pictures of players from them. When he came to Islam, his life changed and he developed such an interest in reading that now he reads 250 to 300 books a year. His has set a reading time of 3 hours every day! He showed his room to the participants and there were books on every wall and in every corner
- It is often very difficult to organize a mentor to give you personal lessons. However, they sit on the shelves waiting for you to pick them up, read and benefit from
- Many a time, authors of books learn things after spending years and years in different situations and spending extensive time thinking about things. What they summarize in their books can be picked up and applied by the readers who do not have to necessarily go through the same long route. The meal is served to them cooked.

What will you gain from this course?

- Different systems to effectively read books
- Tips and tricks to put the learning to work and stick as this is the essence of knowledge (Imam Ghazali said: Knowledge without action is madness)
- Tips on how to pick the right books
- How to focus while reading

- A challenge at the end

Three tips to enhance focus:

- Eat well
 - o The right nutrition in the right amounts
 - o Do not read while eating
- Sleep well
 - o Sleep early and rise early
 - o After Fajr is the best time to read
 - o Some people read before sleep but it is not always the best strategy. The brain says to itself that 'it is the time to sleep' and it accordingly shuts down when you are in bed.
 - o If you want to read before sleeping, you should read at a suitable location, not on your bed.
- Read well
 - o Choose the right books – do not read stupid books and novels that deviate you from the right path and ignite uncontrolled desires
 - o Adopt the right systems to read (as explained in this book)

The cost of procrastination

Do not be in a hurry when reading a book. Spend quality time with it. However, at the same time, do not make it an excuse to procrastinate. The following is the cost of procrastination:

- Many a time, we buy books and put them on shelves never to be opened. What is the benefit of this spending?
- If we don't read and the books keep on sitting, it discourages us to buy more books. We also end up not buying the books that could have changed our life
- We feel left out if we don't read. In many of the important discussions, we sit unaware of the topic being discussed
- This leads to regret – often when the time to change things is already gone

Mistakes we do as readers:

Many people have a misconception that we have to read a book, cover to cover. That is not the case. The following can be done:

- Highlight the areas of interest in the table of contents and read them. No need to read every single thing in the book
- Shaykh mentioned about the book 'Bruce Lee: a biography'. It is a thick book and drives the readers away when they look at its size. However, with the selective reading approach, one can gain a lot of useful things from it.
- Shaykh also mentioned that he likes the following books: Winning attitude by John Maxwell, Lost years (story of a daughter who got addicted to drugs and alcohol and her mother made a significant struggle to cure her of these)

How to remember what you read in a book:

General tips:

- Sticky notes of important points – you will not be going back to that book again so the essential points of learning should be easy to access again in a quick manner
- Also, note the key points in a diary.

Adopt the **3S system** for not forgetting what you read in the book:

- Write a story you learned from the book
- Write a shocking statistic somewhere
- Share with others

Two important systems of effective reading:

System 1:

- Watch a video about the book before purchasing or reading it.
 - o It will provide a summary that will ignite your interest.
 - o A useful youtube channel for book summaries: FightMediocrity
 - o Listen to Ted talks by the authors to develop a personal touch with them and set a context when you read their works
 - o This will also save you from the guilt of purchasing a book that was not worth it or was not of your interest at all. However, if you do happen to buy a book that you won't be going to read, give it to someone who might benefit rather than reading cover to cover what did not interest you or leaving it on the shelf to accumulate dust
- Highlight the sections that you like the most and read them first
- Use your fingers as a lead. The speed of reading will multiply. The brain does not want the finger to pause or slow down. It would accordingly work harder and make you read quicker.
- Sometimes, you don't need to focus on every word. Read the main words and the brain will connect the dots.
- Decide to read the whole book if you wish. For some books you would love to. Shaykh loves reading every single book of Dr.Bart Ehrman (who writes extensively about Christianity, history of Bible and so on)

System 2:

- Read with your ear; Audiobooks are an alternative
- The ahadith are also transmitted orally
- While you are listening to an audiobook, you can busy your eyes with something else – otherwise, your mind will wander away if the eyes are closed.
- Audiobooks are best for traveling or driving (while your eyes are attentively on the road). You can also listen while walking
- There is always a situation when you will have to wait for someone. Always carry a book with you - on your phone or in hard copy, or in your car - so that you can read it whenever there is a window of opportunity.
- Switch between different mediums (listening to reading and so on)
- Read what excites you (if it is good)
- Have a specific time and location for reading
 - o Read at the same time every day, it will become an automatic trigger
 - o Design and environment where remembrance and focus is easier

How to maintain consistency in reading:

- Understand how habit works. There are two very useful books in this regard that shaykh likes a lot.:
 - o Atomic habits
 - o The power of habits
- Understand the Habit loop



- If you want the habit to stick, there should be a cue.. like a reading room, or a book looking at which you become excited to read it
- Cue should be very obvious, e.g. a book should be very much within reach
- Obvious cues will make it easy to execute the routine
- Try to make the execution easy (proper light, proper posture and so on)
- In summary, think of how to make the cues obvious, the routines easy, and the reward satisfying

On contrary, when trying to get rid of bad habits, the cue should be made less obvious. Shaykh gave an example of how he discourages his son to play too many video games. After playing the game, it has to be packed in its box, taped, and put in a shed in his backyard. Every time he wishes to play it, he has to bring it from there, unpack it, set it, connect the cables and then play. This difficulty in executing the routine discourages more frequent use.

FYI: Gaming addiction is classified as a disease

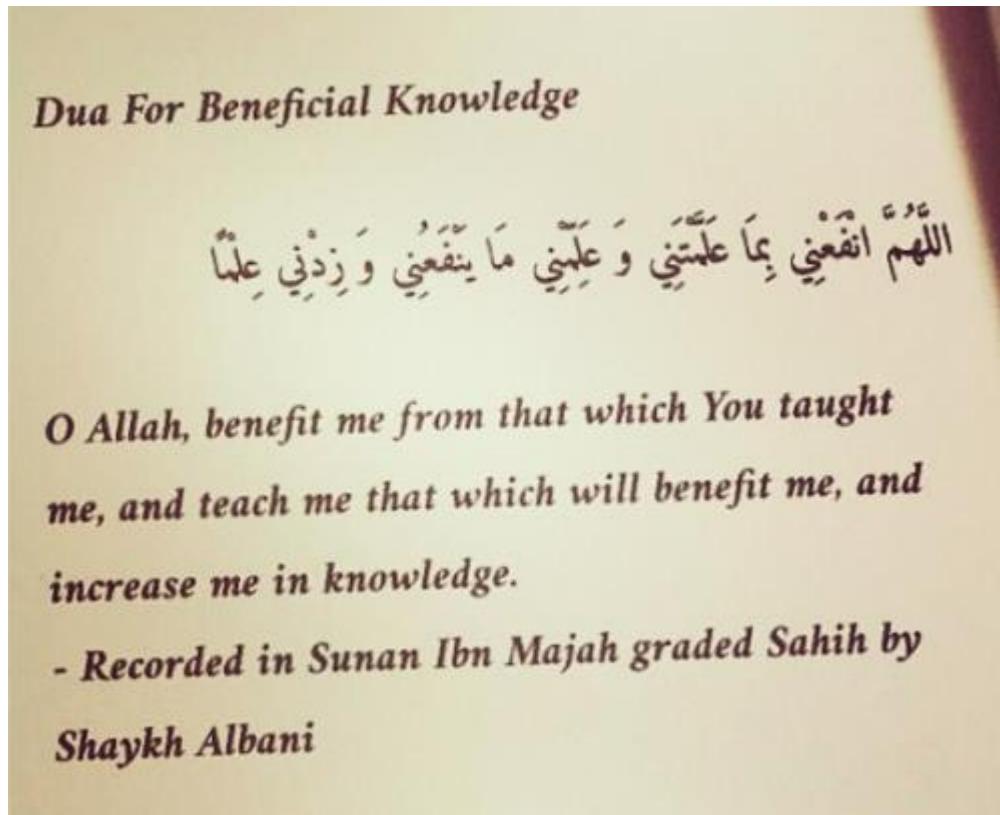
Some Resources to get started:

- Audible (audiobooks)
- InstaRead
- Blinkist (summaries)
- Headway
- Goodreads
- Getabstract

30 day challenge:

- Use any of these systems mentioned above and start reading every day from tomorrow
- Share one learning content with people on social media
- Share with others in person

Make dua:



Upcoming Course

Write - tips and techniques for aspiring authors to accelerate at writing